

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Sent 1/8/82

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Old Oxford Mill

AND/OR COMMON

N/A

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

One-half mile north and one-half mile east of Oxford (NE $\frac{1}{4}$, NW $\frac{1}{4}$,
Sec. 12, T32S, R2E)

N/A

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

N/A

VICINITY OF

Oxford

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
No. 5, Bob Whittaker

STATE

Kansas

CODE

20

COUNTY

Sumner

CODE

191

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☒ DISTRICT
☐ BUILDING(S)
☐ STRUCTURE
☐ SITE
☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC
☒ PRIVATE
☐ BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

N/A

STATUS

☐ OCCUPIED
☒ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
☒ YES: RESTRICTED
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE ☐ MUSEUM
☐ COMMERCIAL ☐ PARK
☐ EDUCATIONAL ☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ ENTERTAINMENT ☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ GOVERNMENT ☐ SCIENTIFIC
☒ INDUSTRIAL ☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ MILITARY ☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

(See continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Sumner County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Wellington

STATE

Kansas 67152

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Kansas Historic Site Survey

DATE

1971

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kansas State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Topeka

STATE

Kansas 66612

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 4

PAGE 1

Genevieve S. Aikins
Rural Route #1, Box 50
Oxford, Kansas 67119

Harry & Wallace Champeny
Oxford, Kansas 67119

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☒ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old Oxford Mill and its mill race are situated just north of Oxford, Kansas. Essentially undisturbed the mill and race provide an excellent opportunity for the study of milling activities in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Old Oxford Mill is a three-story stone building with a basement; it is 40 feet long and 30 feet wide. The steep gable roof is surmounted by a wood frame monitor called a "Texas." On the north side of the main block, there is a two-story frame shed addition, and on the east there is a one-story gable-roofed frame section over the sluice gates.

The main part of the mill is constructed of uncoursed rubble stone. At the corners of the building, the stone has been squared to resemble quoins. The walls of the "Texas" are sheathed with wooden lap siding. Both the gable and "Texas" roofs are covered with deteriorated asphalt shingles. Loading doors are centered in the west gable end wall at the second and third floor levels. Windows are double-hung, four over four-paned sash. There are wooden lintels over the door and window openings. Inside the building hewn timber posts and beams support the wooden floors.

A small dam diverts water from the Arkansas River into the mill race which flows a distance of $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the old mill. It is about 40 feet in width and eight feet in depth.

ALTERATIONS

In the twentieth century some changes were made to the stone mill to accomodate a modern sluice gate arrangement built of reinforced concrete.

Milling machinery was removed from the stone structure in 1935 when a new mill northwest of the original building was completed.

An arched opening in the south basement wall of the mill, which was originally closed by a wooden gate, has been partially filled in with concrete. Beginning in the early 1970's, and especially in 1975, the mill owners attempted to stabilize the unoccupied building's deteriorating condition. The foundation and roof were repaired; sections of the interior wooden walls and floors were replaced and repaired.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1875-76

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

John Hewitt, D. N. Cook

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As originally built and equipped in 1875-76, the Oxford Mill exemplified the type of mill most characteristic of the early flour milling industry in Kansas. It was a water-powered, small capacity operation using a stone burr milling process. This type of mill served the locality, providing all the flour and feed needed for local self-sufficiency. Those changes which have occurred to the Oxford Mill since its construction have reflected transformations in the milling industry throughout the state.

CHRONOLOGY

In April, 1875 the Sumner County Press announced "Good News for Wheat Growers-- Sumner County to have a first-class flouring mill." As the reporter explained, "for two years--or since the experiment of wheat growing has proved a remarkable success--the question of mills has been one of the utmost importance to the people of this county." Prospective customers were enthusiastic about the prospect of having the growing wheat crop manufactured into flour at home.

In Sumner County at this time, grain had to be hauled long distances in wagons to be sold or ground into flour. Flour could be transported or traded more easily than whole grain. During the early settlement period before a railroad network was built to serve the farmers of Kansas, according to Richard Douglas, "one of the first needs of the settlers of the new country was for the means of grinding their wheat...into flour for their family consumption. This necessity caused the building of small gristmills in the early days of every community."

The need for a flour mill in this frontier area was met by John M. Hewitt (formerly of Red Oak, Iowa). Described as "a gentlemen of ample means and a practical mill man," he provided the capital for the venture. Hewitt's partner was D. N. Cook, Sumner County Surveyor. Cook had been instrumental in choosing the best available site for the mill. He had calculated the river's fall at the chosen site to be almost 15 feet. The mill was located approximately one mile northeast of the town of Oxford. North of the mill site, the Press reported that "A dam will be thrown across the east arm of the river at the island, which at this point is narrow (only sixty feet in width) but of good depth, and flowing between strong high banks." The dam diverted water into a mill race which was necessary to effectively channel the waters of the Arkansas River.

Although Hewitt and Cook provided the leadership, the success of the mill project depended upon public support. A citizens' group was responsible for

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

construction of the mill race at an estimated cost of \$2,500. Most of the money was raised by subscription. A local man, Mr. Sleigh, donated stone for the dam, race, and mill from the quarry on his land just a mile from the mill site.

A contract was let April 24, 1875 for the "erection of a large stone building on the Oxford town site, which is to be completed and filled with the necessary machinery for flouring mills, on or before the first day of January, 1876." Busard and Company were to complete the stone work by July. On July 29th the Press mentioned that the Oxford Mill Company had secured the services of W. R. Bean, miller, of nearby Belle Plaine. Presumably, by this time the masonry walls of the mill building were finished. Bean may have directed the millwrights who were building the framework for the machinery which arrived September 9th. Before the mill was put into operation, however, David Hardman replaced Bean as miller.

Early in 1876 the Winfield Courier printed a letter from Oxford dated February 29th, which proclaimed, "The Oxford Mills ground the first bushel of corn that was ground west of the Arkansas and south of the Ninnescah." Oxford residents had prevailed on "Dave" (Hardman) and "Judge" (Hewitt) to try it." Nearly a month later the Press commented that "the Oxford Mills are grinding wheat, and the water power is proving a grand success." In April the paper reported that the mills "are crowded with wheat, and are in operation almost night and day."

The mill was designed to accommodate four run of burrs. Total cost of the mill, race, and machinery was \$15,000. An undocumented local account of the mill's history credited David Hardman with providing a stone burr of the finest quality imported from France. This source also reported that in the early years of the mill's operation D. N. Cook sold his interest to John Hewitt, who then sold to David Hardman.

In Kansas during the 1870's, if the practical requirements could be worked out, a flour mill was a good investment. The Kansas Monthly reported in July, 1878 that "every well conducted mill is paying large profits...and I doubt if there is any other business in Kansas that pays as well." The State Board of Agriculture in its annual report of 1875 enumerated 290 mills in Kansas. Of this number, half were steampowered, ten were wind-driven, and the rest, like the Oxford Mill, were water-powered.

Only a few years after the Oxford Mill began operation, however, flour milling in Kansas changed dramatically. During the early 1880's, the first roller reduction mills were introduced to process the increased production of hard red winter wheat--a type of wheat well suited to Kansas soil and climate. Milling hard winter wheat with stone burrs did not produce a

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

2

satisfactory flour. So, although the burr process persisted in some mills until almost 1890, historian Richard Douglas has observed that, "with the introduction of the new process, and the reorganization of the milling business that followed it, many of the old-time water mills disappeared altogether from the state."

After 1890, flour milling in Kansas became more centralized and capital intensive. Large steam-powered mills capable of producing 1000 barrels of flour a day or more were built in major cities such as Leavenworth, Kansas City, Topeka, and Hutchinson. These mills sent flour to markets in the eastern United States and abroad.

One of the few small local mills that survived into the twentieth century was the Oxford Mill. Relatively cheap power, good management, and a loyal clientele were some of the factors that made it profitable for the Oxford Mill to continue operating. Apparently, some steel roller machinery was incorporated into the wheat milling process in the late 1880's. "Oxford's Best" flour was produced in the mill until 1935 and sold to customers in the surrounding region.

An important figure at a crucial time in the mill's history was Ben F. Kelsey. He came to Oxford in 1886 to manage the mill, and became a popular salesman for "Oxford's Best" products. Kelsey leased the mill from 1894 to 1900. The Mitchell family owned the mill from 1900 to 1910.

Charles Champeny and B. F. Fisher purchased the mill in 1910. The Champeny family has maintained its interest in the mill ever since. Fisher sold out his interest in 1916; the mill was then inactive until 1918. In that year the Champenys added an elevator building to house modern roller process machinery. The original water wheel was replaced in 1923.

In 1933 the Oxford Mill was grinding grain "on shares." When farmers brought in a sixty-pound bushel of wheat, they received thirty-four pounds of flour with the rest going to the miller. Because of depressed economic conditions at the time, some farmers came from as far as two hundred miles away to exchange their wheat for flour.

Charles Champeny and his two sons built a new mill in 1935 northwest of the old stone structure. A turbine generator was installed in the old mill to provide electrical power for the modern operation. The company produced all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, corn meal, and stock feed.

In 1973 the turbine broke down; since then the old mill building has been

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

unused. Power for the modern mill is now purchased from the city generating plant.

Recently, the twentieth century Oxford Mill has operated two or three days a week, turning out about ten tons of finished products a week. Corn meal is still stone ground; wheat products are ground on burr mills and rollers. The mill presently runs about one third stock feed and two thirds with most of the feed sold locally.

In June, 1980 the town of Oxford received an \$8,000 loan from the Department of Energy for a feasibility study of the site's electrical hydrogeneration potential. A plan was proposed to repair two 70-year-old turbines in the original mill building, build up the main diversion dam across the river, place new gates in a smaller dam controlling the flow of the millrace, dredge the channel, and repair the foundation of the mill. M. E. Jenkins, chairman of a local committee working on the project, commented, "Not only would it produce power, but I would hope one day the old mill could be refurbished and become a tourist attraction."

NOTE: The new Oxford Mill is not included in the National Register nomination. Since it is less than fifty years old, the significance of this type of mill is not as well understood. The new Oxford Mill does not appear to be exceptionally important.

THIS STATEMENT REFLECTS CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND MAY BE SUBJECT TO FUTURE AMENDMENT.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 1

"Area's Oldest Mill Still Water-Powered," Manhattan Grass and Grain,
December 6, 1977.

"Belle Plaine Items," Sumner County Press, July 29, 1875.

"Century-Old Mill Coming to Life," Wichita Eagle & Beacon, July 27, 1975.

"Good News for Wheat Growers," Sumner County Press, April 29, 1875.

"Letter from Oxford," Winfield Courier, March 9, 1876.

"Kilowatts in Oxford Mill's Future," Arkansas City Traveler, June 6, 1980.

Miscellaneous News Column, Sumner County Press, September 9, 1875, March 2,
1876, March 23, 1876.

"Oxford Items," Sumner County Press, April 6, 1876.

"Oxford Milling Family Marks Centennial," Arkansas City Traveler, August
22, 1974.

"Oxford Mill Takes Road to Restoration," Winfield Daily Courier, September
15, 1974.

BOOKS

Coats, Leota M. "The Oxford Mill," unpublished paper.

Douglas, Richard L. "A History of Manufactures in the Kansas District,"
Kansas State Historical Collections. Vol. XI (1909-10). pp. 149-154.

Whittemore, Margaret. Historic Kansas. (Lawrence: University of Kansas
Press, 1954.)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

The boundary of the nominated property begins from the point where the mill race starts at the diversion dam on the Arkansas River located approximately 2.0 miles north of the city of Oxford, includes the mill race as it runs south approximately 1.75 miles to the mill, includes the old mill and then runs south approximately .75 mile to the point where the race joins the Arkansas River (that is, only the mill race and the old mill building are included in this nomination.) The old mill building is located in the northwest quarter of Section 12, T32S, R2E Sumner County, Kansas. Both dams on the mill race are located in Section 36, T31S, R2E.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

ARTICLES:

"An Old Grist Mill near Oxford, Kansas Grinds Farmers' Wheat "On Shares," Sumner County Times, February 18, 1933.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 12.5

Quadrangle Scale: 1:24,000

Quadrangle Name: Oxford

UTM REFERENCES

A 114 663 670 413 030
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C 114 663 230 412 870

B 114 663 180 412 940
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D 114 663 090 412 870

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

E 1 4 6 6 3 0 7 0 4 1 2 8 1 6 0

(See continuation sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Dale Nimz, Program Assistant
Julie A. Wortman, Historic Preservation Specialist II

ORGANIZATION

Historic Preservation Department--Kansas State Historical Society

DATE

1-8-82

STREET & NUMBER

120 West 10th

TELEPHONE

(913) 296-5294

CITY OR TOWN

Topeka

STATE

Kansas 66612

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ☐

STATE ☒ X

LOCAL ☐

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

Executive Director, Ks. State Historical Society

DATE

1-8-82

FDR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

